THE OTHER CITY: NEW YORK IN POETRY
Freshman Honors Seminar, Fall 2014
New York University
Tuesdays, 3:30-6pm

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Course Description

Beyond the touristy New York, there is another city, one that has inspired countless poets. It is an immigrant, working-class, bohemian, peripheral, and sometimes even quiet city. In this seminar, we will explore this other New York City as captured by generations of poets, from Walt Whitman to the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. We will combine close reading and formal analysis of the poetry with visits to specific neighborhoods, sites, and archives (including digital archives). Along the way, we will examine the mechanics of writing critically about poetry, and we will use New York City as a laboratory to experiment with different kinds of literary observation and analysis.

While working toward a research paper, we will also explore alternative research tools (such as the fieldnote, the photo-journal, and the digital archive) in an effort to develop our own creative approaches to literary study. Works to be discussed may include Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues*, Federico Garcia Lorca's *Poet in New York*, Diane di Prima's *Revolutionary Letters*, and the Miguel Algarín and Bob Holman anthology *Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe*. Additional readings in history, sociology, journalism, and literary and cultural studies may also guide us in our explorations. Lastly, we will examine a variety of poetry performances in an effort to engage with poetry at the limits of the page, in the contours of the embodied city.
Required Books


[Additional materials will be made available on NYU Classes and as handouts.]

Recommended Books (also available on reserve at Bobst)


Additional Suggested Materials on NYC History


Assignments and Grading (detailed guidelines will be provided at the start of the semester)

Due Sept. 16 (5% of final grade): fieldnotes (2-3 pages) from a visit to a New York area location described in *Leaves of Grass*
Due Sept. 30 (5% of final grade): analysis (2-3 pages) of a resource from the Whitman archive (http://www.whitmanarchive.org/)

Due Oct. 28 (15% of final grade): close reading (5-6 pages) of a poem from The Weary Blues

Due Dec. 2 (30% of final grade): research paper (7-8 pages) [Do not worry; we will work our way toward this!]

Due on the final exam date (30% of final grade): photo- and/or video-journal with accompanying essay (7-8 pages) [Again, not to worry; we will prepare for this!]

Ongoing (15% of final grade): class participation, including short assignments and quizzes (if any)

Schedule (page numbers TBA)

Sep. 2 Introduction to the course and handouts from Leaves of Grass and from William B. Helmreich's The New York Nobody Knows: Walking 6,000 Miles in the City

Sep. 9 Leaves of Grass [recommended reading: Meyer on Word Choice, Word Order, and Tone]; in-class exercise with The Walt Whitman Archive (whitmanarchive.org)

Sep. 16 Leaves of Grass [recommended reading: Meyer on Images]; Lytle Shaw, “Whitman's Urbanism” (in Cambridge Companion); fieldnotes (2-3 pages) due

Sep. 23 Leaves of Grass [recommended reading: Meyer on Figures of Speech]

Sep. 30 The Weary Blues [recommended reading: Meyer on Symbol, Allegory, and Irony]; Thulani Davis, “African American literary movements” (in Cambridge Companion); analysis (2-3 pages) of a resource from the Whitman archive due

Oct. 7 The Weary Blues [recommended reading: Meyer on Sounds and Patterns of Rhythm]; tracks from the Hughes/Mingus/Feather Weary Blues LP (on NYU Classes); in-class scansion exercise

Oct. 14 No Classes Scheduled

Oct. 21 Poet in New York, [recommended reading: Meyer on Poetic Forms and Open Form]; view the resources and interactive map at http://lorcanyc.com

Oct. 28 Poet in New York, close reading (5-6 pages) of a poem from The Weary Blues due

Nov. 4 Revolutionary Letters; Daniel Kane, “From poetry to punk in the East Village” (in Cambridge Companion)

Nov. 11 Revolutionary Letters; podcast of di Prima reading (NYU Classes)

Nov. 18 Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe; Miguel Algarín “Nuyorican Literature” and scenes from Marlis Momber's documentary Viva Loisaida! (both on NYU Classes)

Nov. 25 Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe and assorted performance clips (NYU Classes)
Dec. 2 *The Essential Hits of Shorty Bon Bon*; visit to the archives of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies in East Harlem; **research paper (7-8 pages) due**

Dec. 9 *The Essential Hits of Shorty Bon Bon*; reading by Willie Perdomo (date and time TBA);

Due on the date of our final exam: **photo- and/or video-journal with accompanying essay (7-8 pages)**